

## 11. The Christian and Work (4Q 2020—Education)

**Biblical Material:** Gen. 3:19, Deut. 16:15, Exod. 25:10–30:38, Gal. 5:22–26, Eccles. 9:10, 1 Cor. 10:31, 15:58.

### Quotes

- The only Christian work is good work, well done. *Dorothy L. Sayers*
- Read the Bible. Work hard and honestly. And don't complain. *Billy Graham*
- It is our best work that God wants, not the dregs of our exhaustion. I think he must prefer quality to quantity. *George Macdonald*
- No good work is done anywhere without aid from the Father of Lights. *C.S. Lewis*
- Temptations which accompany the working day will be conquered on the basis of the morning breakthrough to God. Decisions, demanded by work, become easier and simpler where they are made not in the fear of men, but only in the sight of God. He wants to give us today the power which we need for our work. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*
- Deprived of meaningful work, men and women lose their reason for existence; they go stark, raving mad. *Fyodor Dostoevsky*

### Questions

How does what we believe affect the way we act? What has the Christian and work got to do with education? How do we relate our Christian convictions to our career? What happens when our work does not match our expectations? What should guide us in how we express our beliefs in the workplace? How can we best represent the character of God in our work?

### Bible summary

One of the consequences of the Fall was that work would become laborious (Gen. 3:19). God promises to bless our work (Deut. 16:15). Exod. 25:10–30:38 details the work involved in making the Tabernacle. The fruit of the Spirit is outlined in Gal. 5:22–26. “Whatever you do, do it with all your strength, for when you go to the grave there’s no more working or thinking, no more knowing or being wise.” Eccles. 9:10 FBV. All that we do should be to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). “Be strong, stand firm, doing everything you can for the Lord’s work, since you know that nothing you do in the Lord is wasted.” 1 Cor 15:58 FBV.

### Comment

The frequent argument is made that the reason for a good education is that it provides opportunities for a better job. Certainly education is important for work, but that should not be the primary goal. True education is to help facilitate the development of our faculties so we can be all that we can be. Most of all this relates to the spiritual aspect where as we learn about God we come into a closer and deeper relationship with such a wonderful, loving Being.

When it comes to work, what we believe must play a vital role in what we do and how we do it. When we consider “the Christian and work” we’re looking at how we relate to work, and to the relationships at work. In all of these areas our convictions about God play out in practice.

In our minds we often equate labor and work with unpleasant requirements. We work hard so we can do what we really want—take vacations! So—is work a necessary evil? Or can we see more to work than something that takes our time and stops us doing what we would prefer to do? How does our work reflect our beliefs and how is this part of our witness to the universe?

Heaven has traditionally been equated with eternal rest. But is this an attractive proposition? What of those who really enjoy their work, and find great fulfillment in what they do? There is a need to re-balance our ideas of both work in this life, and what will occupy us in the hereafter.

How is God the Lord of our work? Does he care what work we do, or is it our attitude to work that is more important? It would seem that with the right perspective we can “work through our work” and reveal the kind of God we know. While all labor contains “boring” elements, recognizing how work can be both fulfilling for ourselves and useful to others is an important aspect of true belief.

What about issues involving labor unions? We may have divergent views—are we on the side of the “bosses” or the “workers”? Recognize how such debates have affected history—think of Marx/Engels, for example! What’s wrong with communism? Or is this getting too political?!

How does the parable of the talents apply (Matt. 25)? What was wrong in the servant hiding the master’s money—wasn’t that simply a good safeguard? What about the servant’s response that he knew the master was a hard man? Is this a good representation of the nature of God, or does it say more about the nature and attitude of a servant? See how our response to such questions also contributes to answering the issues in great controversy, and whether we see ourselves as God’s friends or simply his servants, his “employees.”

However much we labor here, working to accomplish our dreams, we need to keep in mind the eternal that lies beyond such transience. Our work must be focussed on more than pleasing ourselves in that self-centered sense. For what does it profit a man...?

Only as we place ourselves in the stream of God’s intent, working together for things of true value, do we find real contentment and pleasure in our work. None of us want to think we have lived in vain, and yet we so often place our value on things that do not satisfy and work for that which is not bread.

Only as God is at the center of our life mission will we find he is the Lord of our labor.

### **Ellen White comments**

To every man is given his work; not one is excused. Each has a part to act according to his capacity; and it devolves upon the one who presents the truth to carefully and prayerfully learn the ability of all who accept the truth, and then to instruct them and lead them along, step by step, letting them realize the burden of responsibility resting upon them to do the work that God has for them to do. It should be urged upon them again and again that no one will be able to resist temptation, to answer the purpose of God, and to live the life of a Christian unless he shall take up his work, be it great or small, and do that work with conscientious fidelity. There is some thing for all to do besides going to church and listening to the word of God. They must practice the truth heard, carrying its principles into their everyday life. They must be doing work for Christ constantly, not from selfish motives, but with an eye single to the glory of Him who made every sacrifice to save them from ruin. {4T 397.1}

In every business transaction a Christian will be just what he wants his brethren to think he is. His course of action is guided by underlying principles. He does not scheme; therefore he has nothing to conceal, nothing to gloss over. He may be criticized, he may be tested, but his unbending integrity will shine forth like pure gold. He is a blessing to all connected with him, for his word is trustworthy. He is a man who will not take advantage of his neighbor. He is a friend and benefactor to all, and his fellow men put confidence in his counsel... A truly honest man will never take advantage of weakness and incompetency in order to fill his own purse. {CG 153.2}

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